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RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 9291  
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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 3070  
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0278  
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 6736  
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 4613  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001090

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: NORTHERN GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES SPEAK  
CANDIDLY ABOUT MILITARY AND PARAMILITARIES AS TIGER ATTACKS  
ON JAFFNA PENINSULA INTENSIFY

REF: COLOMBO 1051 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: James F. Entwistle, Deputy Chief of Mission. 1.4(b,d)

11. (C) Summary. The Government Agents of the northern districts of Jaffna and Mannar and the District Judge of Vavuniya spoke candidly with us in separate meetings June 28-30 about the ground situation in the majority-Tamil areas in which they serve, including military attacks on civilians and the covert activities of non-LTTE Tamil paramilitaries. Meanwhile, Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) low-level attacks against Government of Sri Lanka military targets on the Jaffna peninsula intensified June 30 - July 2 with sea and ground engagements largely typical of the past several months. The three Tamil local government authorities carefully reiterated what we have suspected, that several parties at covert play in the north and east undermine fragile 2002 Ceasefire Agreement (CFA). End summary.

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Weekend Engagement Concentrated In Jaffna  
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12. (U) On June 30 the Sri Lanka Navy off the coast of Point Pedro, the northernmost point of the Jaffna peninsula, sunk a small LTTE Sea Tiger boat allegedly packed with explosives. On July 1 - 2, Tigers lobbed hand grenades at separate Sri Lanka Army (SLA) bunkers and police checkpoints in Jaffna and the northern Forward Defense Line (FDL) of Welioya, according to the Ministry of Defense website, which also claimed troops did not fire back due to presence of civilians in the areas. SLA troops uncovered an unexploded claymore mine on a roadside near the northeastern coastal town of Trincomalee on July 2.

13. (C) Against that backdrop, poloff met with Mr. M. Ganesh, Government Agent (GA) Jaffna; Mr. V. Visvalingam, Government Agent Mannar; and Mr. M. Elancheliyan, District Judge, Vavuniya, in Colombo in separate meetings June 28-30. The soft-spoken GA Jaffna (protect source) emphasized the pressure faced by GSL authorities in those areas to ensure the welfare of their constituents without stepping on the toes of the GSL or LTTE. Because GSL authorities "must work

in uncleared areas also," Ganesh alluded to an "unofficial arrangement" between the GSL and the LTTE in which the LTTE approves GSL appointments in those areas.

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Jaffna GA Explains Civilians' Quandary  
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14. (C) Jaffna Government Agent Ganesh described an uncomfortable political balance in Jaffna, where he contended Social Services and Welfare Minister Douglas Devananda of the anti-LTTE EPDP spends much time in his party's political office working on his ministerial portfolio. The minister doesn't answer phone calls or letters, Ganesh asserted. Rather, civilians have to go to the EPDP office "in order to get things done. Sending a Minister from the EPDP to do political work now is not appropriate," as civilians in LTTE-dominant areas fear being seen at the headquarters of an anti-Tiger party.

15. (C) Ganesh depicted a "fear psychosis" among civilians who feel they might be killed without provocation. He said that security forces attempt to link every civilian murdered to LTTE training activities, which doesn't fairly reflect the ground situation in which the LTTE often forces civilians to take part in so-called self-defense training. Ganesh contended, "You can't blame civilians for going to the (LTTE) training. They never thought they'd revert to this war situation, so they joined LTTE celebrations confidently." He added that the position of civilians living in LTTE-controlled areas is grave and depressed.

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16. (C) Yet the security forces cannot be fully blamed for their alleged bias against Tamils because of the lack of interaction and understanding between the two, GA Jaffna opined: "The Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) lives in isolation. The sailors have no contact and no relationship with civilians." He added, "The GSL can't build the confidence of civilians until the killings stop." He added, "If the GSL identifies someone as LTTE, they should take legal action, not kill him. To punish them before the law gives confidence to the people."

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Paramilitary Spoilers  
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17. (C) According to GA Jaffna, the conflict has expanded to involve multiple players, leading to the most unpredictable situation, he says, in his twenty-plus years as a civil servant. "Each party blames the other," Ganesh said, "No one knows who is really behind the killings, and no one is brave enough to say the truth." He named a number of parties who could be involved on the ground level; the Sri Lanka security forces, the GSL-allied Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP) led by Minister Douglas Devananda, the Eelam People's Republican Liberation Front (EPFRL), the Eelam National Democratic Liberation Front (ENDLF) led by Sri Lankan Tamil refugee-returnees from India, the eastern-LTTE breakaway Karuna Faction, and the People's Army - or Makkal Padai in Tamil - an LTTE subdivision which opposes the EPDP.

18. (C) Mannar GA V. Visvalingam claimed in a June 30 meeting with poloff that the Sri Lanka Navy (SLN) rather than the SLA and Police are using paramilitaries in Mannar, which he said explains the Sea Tiger's focus on SLN targets of late. "Mannar island is controlled by the Navy," he said, "but even they cover their faces because they're scared." He claimed that though cordon and search measures conducted by the SLA continue on Mannar, "civilians are not involved in those LTTE activities."

19. (C) On June 29, Vavuniya District High Court Judge M. Elancheliyan (protect source) claimed to poloff that another

group, the Tamil National Forces (TNF), has unofficial links with SLA Deep Penetration Units (DPU), who need the help of Tamil speakers to infiltrate Tiger areas in Vavuniya and Jaffna. He argued that "every civilian knows the paramilitaries work from inside the army camps" but that no one will give evidence out of fear.

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Security Personnel Are Human, Too  
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¶10. (C) Moreover, Elancheliyan argued, security forces feel pressed between the powers that be: "The SLA is afraid to fight against the Karuna faction" which threatens civilians in the northeast because "they'll be considered anti-government or (opposition United National Party) UNP supporters." In other words, the security forces are reluctant to intervene in would-be attacks by members of the Karuna faction.

¶11. (C) Elancheliyan contended the police are more professional than the SLA, but still aren't fully investigating charges of violence against civilians. "The police won't come out after 6 PM to investigate a charge of extortion, etc.," he added, "because the police suspect a civilian is inviting them into a claymore attack."

¶12. (C) On the other hand, Elancheliyan explained, the community feels the Sri Lankan authorities, including the courts, are cheating them because civilian complaints and killings aren't investigated. The community feels the GSL reacted to the April 21 suicide bomb attempt on Army Commander Fonseka and the June 15 civilian bus attack with

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Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) aerial bombardments "only because (the retaliation) was in minority areas," he said.

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Solutions?  
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¶13. (C) The GSL authorities clearly toe a fine line between their responsibilities to civilians, their GSL affiliation, and their practical neutrality toward the LTTE. Said Elancheliyan, "I'm a Sri Lankan judge. I may be a Tamil, but I'm not a Tiger. The Security Forces have the responsibility to protect civilians." The district judge claimed the Chief Justice of the Judicial Services commission ensures his personal safety to "speak out about SLA complaints." Likewise, Mannar GA V. Visvalingam described himself as an advocate for the people, stepping in between GSL and civilians following the June 21 Mannar incident in which SLN personnel fired on and threw grenades into a church crowded with civilians following a Sea Tiger attack on the Pesalai SLN base (reftel).

¶14. (C) A sincere commitment to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the GSL and LTTE, Ganesh argued, is the only way forward. District Judge Elancheliyan asked the international community to influence the GSL to reopen investigations, saying, "The President has forgotten his human rights background. The US Embassy should pressure both side to stop the killings." Mannar GA V. Visvalingam asked that embassies visit conflict-affected areas in the North-East to send "a good message to civilians and the Security Forces." He added that civilians feel the GSL will have to think twice about retaliating against civilians if the international community gets involved.

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Comment  
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¶15. (C) These Tamil GSL authorities, while not outright LTTE apologists, certainly honed in on the responsibilities of the

government to control military and paramilitary actors while reserving comment on the LTTE. Their recognition of areas in which the security forces may be restricting civilians rights gives credence to reports we have heard from non-GSL sources.

We will continue to press the GSL on the need for impeccable security force behavior and serious investigations of incidents which have already occurred. End comment.

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